

INCOMING TELEGRAM *Department of State*

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FOR LEDDY FROM AMBASSADOR

REF: DEPTTEL 3563

1. I HAVE VERY SERIOUS DOUBTS OF THE WISDOM OF APPROACHING THE FRENCH IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT AN OFFICIAL DENIAL OF CIA INVOLVEMENT IN THE BEN BARKA AFFAIR. INsofar AS WE CAN ASCERTAIN THERE IS NO RPT NO SIGN OF ANY OFFICIAL INSTIGATION OF ANY SUCH REPORTS. NOR, FRANKLY, DO WE SEE HERE IN FRANCE ANY SERIOUS SIGN OF COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN. IN THE PRESS THE MOST IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL TO HINT AT POSSIBLE CIA INVOLVEMENT WAS FRANCOIS

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MAURIAC WHO CAN HARDLY BE CALLED A COMMUNIST AGENT. OTHER FRENCH PAPERS OF VARIOUS DEGREES HAVE PICKED IT UP BUT DEPARTMENT'S DENIAL HAS BEEN CARRIED IN EVERY LEADING FRENCH NEWSPAPER. HUMANITE HAS HARDLY MENTIONED ACCUSATION. FURTHERMORE, TODAY AND EXCEPT FOR ONE PAPER YESTERDAY THE COMMENT HAD DROPPED OUT OF THE FRENCH PRESS ENTIRELY.

2. I BELIEVE IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO RAISE IT WITH THE FRENCH WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BRING ABOUT A POLITE REFUSAL. IN VIEW OF THE EXTREMELY MURKY ASPECTS OF THE BEN BARKA AFFAIR IT IS HIGHLY DOUBTFUL THAT THE FRENCH WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE A GRATUITOUS STATEMENT ABSOLVING THE AMERICANS BEFORE ALL ELEMENTS OF THE AFFAIR ARE COMPLETELY KNOWN (WHICH MAY BE)

3. SINCE TODAY IS SATURDAY AND IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO FIND A SUITABLE OFFICIAL TO DEAL WITH THIS I WOULD SUGGEST WE LEAVE IT ON ICE OVER THE WEEKEND AND THEN IF THERE IS FURTHER FRENCH PRESS COMMENT OR EVIDENCE OF INVOLVEMENT WE RECONSIDER THE MATTER.

GP-3. BOWEN

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